

699] LONDON, SATURDAY, FEB. 27, 1819. [700]

TO

**HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS, THE
PRINCE REGENT.**

On the means, by which the Borough-mongers have degraded the King and his family.—On the dangers, to which the Crown may be exposed by its being identified with those who traffic in seats, and who deal in bribery, corruption, and perjury.—On the means of preserving the Crown, and preventing universal confusion in case of a sudden blowing-up of the Paper-money.

LETTER I.

On the means by which the Borough-mongers have degraded the King and his family.

North Hampstead, Long Island,
1st Jan. 1819.

MAY IT PLEASE

YOUR ROYAL HIGHNESS,

I have reason to believe, that the paper-money, which is now current in England, will be speedily destroyed. I will frankly own to our Royal Highness, that, as a

loyal subject of his Majesty, as an Englishman to whom the freedom and renown of England are as dear as is his own life, I wish for that destruction ; because, until that paper be destroyed, there can, I am convinced, be no safety for his Majesty's crown and none for the property, liberty, or lives of his faithful and brave people.

Let me, with great respect, though with great urgency, beseech your Royal Highness to look steadily at the picture, which England now presents, though I will not point at particulars; for the sight is so odious and so disgraceful, that I cannot bring myself to the act of exhibiting its parts to your view. But in this group of objects, every one so offensive to the mind, what is the station that your Royal Highness occupies? There you are, surrounded by a set of ministers, protected against the law of the land by a *Bill of Indemnity*, your self protected by a

bill of Indemnity for those who crammed RILEY into a dungeon, and who were so *merry* at the description of *Ogden's rupture*!

It is impossible that your Royal Highness should not *feel* the insult contained in this act; and, if Lord Holland, by his conduct at the passing of it, astonished me, how much more ought I to have been astonished, that it passed without a word of reprobation on the part of your Royal Brothers. They had seats in parliament, if you had not: they could have opposed it, if you could not; and, if one of them had moved an amendment; if he had moved so to alter the title and provisions as to make the bill appear in its true light; if he had said, "pass a law, " my Lords, if you find it necessary, "to protect your own persons against the hands of the English people; " but, my Royal Brother is not "hated by the people; he stands in need of no such protection; he is in no danger from the hatred of a just, brave and humane people: and, if my vote is the only one against this odious bill, "it never shall pass without that vote and my solemn protest."

If either of the Royal Dukes had thus spoken, and thus acted, what an effect would it have had upon the nation!

But they appear to have believed all the calumnies which were heaped upon the people. They appear to have thought it necessary to their own preservation to make common cause with the Borough usurpers; or, rather, to submit to their sway. Now, however, when it must be clear to every eye, that the Borough usurpation rests wholly upon a little bit of their paper, and that that paper *can* be destroyed at any moment, I shall hope, that your Royal Brothers will lose no time in shaking off *their* dependence on that slender foundation.

The fact, may it please your Royal Highness, has come to me, that Mr. BAGOT, your Envoy in America, has, through the Consul at Philadelphia, applied to artists in that city for *specimens* of Banknotes, in order that he may transmit them to his Employers! Thus is the representative of the King of England acting as the agent of a Company of paper-money makers, who have falsified their contracts

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and violated their charter, and who have an annual Indemnity Bill to protect them against the operation of the offended law; and thus is the name of your Royal Highness associated with those of these plunderers of your Father's people. It was not enough, it seems, to render null the prerogative of the King as to the uttering of money; it was not enough to degrade his Royal name and office by affixing his portrait to pieces of money issued at the sole will and pleasure of persons who wholly disowned his control or authority, and who made the money of what weight and what quality and of what nominal amount they pleased: this degradation of the king's person and office was not enough without the suffering of these same persons, a Company of Merchants who had falsified their promises, to employ his Ambassador as *their representative*.

This single fact, may it please you, Sir, speaks with a voice of thunder to all those, who make common cause with this base institution of paper-money. It can hardly be supposed, that the Am-

bassador would have been employed thus without the concurrence of your Ministers, though I am very sure, that your Royal Highness's sense of duty and of dignity would have prevented your assent to an act so degrading. The connection, then, between your Ministers and the Bank here shows itself in a most staring light. But, which is far more interesting to your Royal Highness and the people, it shows, that the state of the Bank's affairs is so desperate as to make them resort to aid such as no rational man, in private life, would rely on in *any case*. It must be in contemplation to *adopt* the specimens. To make English Notes according to the specimens. And, if this be done, the *imitating* of these notes is as easy *here* as the making of the specimens.

To address your Royal Highness on matters of so vulgar, so low, so peddling a nature, I bring myself to do with the utmost reluctance. But, those who have been your ministers for so many years, and those who are in reality their masters, have brought the affairs of England into a low and peddling

state. When a Loan-jobber is a principal personage at a Congress of Crowned-Heads, and when a King's Ambassador has full powers to negotiate with manufacturers of Bank-notes, loan-jobbing and bank-note-making may be tolerated in an address from a subject to a sovereign.

It is a gross delusion to hold forth, that the notes made at Philadelphia are inimitable. They are imitated here continually. And I, on my duty and allegiance, of which no man can entertain a higher idea than myself, most solemnly assure your Royal Highness, that the Bank in London can make nothing in the shape of notes, fac-similes of which cannot be made here for two guineas a hundred. The making of bank-note paper has been pushed to a degree of perfection which is wholly without a parallel. All commercial intercourse between the two countries must be cut off, and that instantly, or the English Bank-notes can have not one day of security.

I bear constantly in mind the oppressions of my Country; the tyranny which has laid its iron

hand upon myself I never forget for one twenty-four hours; but, I still love my Country, and would prepare for the inevitable destruction of the paper-bubble. That the estates and distinctions of the wrongers of the people will be in danger is *nothing*; but, that all should be thrown into confusion is what no considerations of private, or even of public vengeance, however just, can induce me to wish. Therefore, I shall, before I conclude, endeavour to point out to your Royal Highness, what ought to be done, on a sudden blowing-up of the Paper Bubble, to prevent universal confusion, and, above all things, to prevent danger to his Majesty's person, and his lawful government.

I am aware, may it please your Royal Highness, of the constant endeavours, on the part of our oppressors, to induce your Royal Highness to believe, that, because we seek the restoration of our rights, we wish the destruction of the kingly government. If we are to judge from acts, those oppressors, indeed, wish ardently for such destruction; for, nothing

within their power have they left of your Royal Household. The undone to render the Royal authority detested and abhorred: while they have missed no opportunity of degrading, personally, every branch of your Royal House. Their constant endeavour has been to make the people believe, that the Royal Family was the principal cause of the people's sufferings. They have harped upon the extravagance of this family, to whom they have, indeed, voted money, but, which money, they have, for the far greater part, taken away again, and for their own use. They always speak of the Civil List Allowance as a sum expended at the Royal Pleasure; while, as your Royal Highness well knows, the whole of the money is expended at the pleasure of the seat-filers, and the far greater part of it pocketed by themselves, their relations and dependents. It is a fact, but a fact not generally known to the people, that your Royal Highness has not the choosing of your Ministers, your Steward, your Master-of-horse, your Chamberlain, your Bed-chamber Lords, your Groom of the Stole, nor any one of the Officers of your Royal Household. The seat-filers, upon some occasions, have complained (as in the case of Lords Essex and Milton) that the horse-guards, on Court days, prevent them from passing in carriages along certain streets. Of this they make a great matter. They talk of it as being dangerous to liberty: they talk of the danger of a standing army in the hands of *the king*: while, at the very same moment, they keep an immense army on foot to attack *the people*, who meet legally to petition for a restoration of those rights, which these same seat-sellers have usurped. They employ their press to blazon forth every expence of your Royal Highness: they descend even to household furniture and cooking utensils: while they themselves wallow in luxuries and extravagance purchased with the public money. They have, by the management of the Crown Lands, divided the estate of the Crown amongst themselves. They have, in this one item, swallowed more than has been expended at the will of the Royal Family during two centuries. They talk of the danger of suffering tho-

Royal Family to possess landed estates; while they, in the shape of sinecures and pensions and grants, receive the public money to the amount of millions, and with it purchase up the lands of those who are, successively, ruined by the taxes. All the patronage, all the power of bestowing dignities and emoluments in the Church, in the Law, and of Commissions either in the Army, the Navy, the Colonies, they keep in their own hands. They appoint Ambassadors and Consuls. And yet they have the impudence to talk of the *influence of the Crown*. There are two greedy factions contending for this power, and, while the faction who is *out* rails against the *influence of the Crown*, the faction who is *in* defends *the Crown*; not by avowing that the Crown has no influence at all, but by pretending that *it is* the Crown which has the influence, and by asserting that the influence is just and proper.

It is in this way, may it please your Royal Highness, that the Royal Family of England has long been rendered objects of what I will not name, amongst the people

at large, who have been in no fault, however; because it was next to impossible, that they should not be deceived by the everlasting falsehoods of the press, always in the hands of those, who had the public money at their disposal. Of the conduct of these vile factions towards the Royal Family nothing can be wanted, in the way of specimen, other than their paying, out of the public money, for libels published against the King's sons. The elder WALTER was prosecuted by the King's Attorney-General for libels against the *Duke of York* and *Yourselves*. He was sentenced to two years imprisonment for each. He suffered the first sentence; and your Royal Highness applied for a remission of the sentence for the libel against yourself. The libels were published at the instigation of the King's *Ministers*, as they were called; and they paid to Walter the expences and damages attending the prosecutions. These facts I saw stated, in a *Letter from the Elder Walter to a Noble Lord*, in the Elder Walter's own hand writing; and which Letter that Noble Lord will,

I hope, lay before your Royal Highness. At the time when those libels were published, your Royal Highness and your brothers were endeavouring to make a stand for your *rights*. This was the cause of the calumnies now spread abroad, by the same factions, against the people. The factions had usurped the rights of the Crown, and were resolved to keep them: they have also usurped the rights of the People, and will, as long as they are able, keep them too.

The factions play off the King against the People and the People against the King alternately as their interests dictate. Then you were demanding your *hereditary rights*, you were calumniated as a would-be tyrant, as a man aiming at despotic sway, and were told that the Crown was to be disposed of

as the *people pleased*. Thus were the people cajoled to take part against you. But, *now*, when the people are demanding their rights, *their birthright*, they are calumniated as traitors, who wish to depose and kill you, though, in no one instance, has there appeared proof, that any one man of us entertained

even the *wish* to touch any part of your rights, much less to abate your Royal office, or injure or insult your person. When the factions are attacked for their frauds, corruptions, and tyranny, they hold you out before them, and pretend that it is *you* that we wish to destroy. When we complain of their *selling and hiring seats*, they accuse us of a wish to *overthrow the House of Brunswick*. When Perceval and Castlereagh were distinctly accused of selling a seat; when proof of the vile, corrupt, and treasonable transaction was offered at the bar, the two factions joined, and swore most vehemently, that the accusers had in view a *Democratic Revolution*; and, for *that reason*, above all others, they refused to hear the proof.

The Long Parliament, who, at last, cut off a King's head, have always been justly accused of great baseness in using the *King's name to levy war against himself*. Yet, Sir, that was not more base than is the conduct of the factions, who make use of your name in the commission of all their acts of

oppression on your people and of insult on yourself, and who pay out of the taxes, raised in your name, the expences of calumniating you and your family.

In order the more securely to carry on their work of making the King suspect the People and the People hate the King, the factions have, step by step, cut off all communication between them. The law, that law which placed your Royal Highness's family upon the throne, says, that the people have a right to *Petition the King*. This is declared to make part of our "birth right." This right so necessary to King as well as people, has now been wholly set aside, as far as regards those who are in danger of being oppressed, or who may be disposed to give your Royal Highness any information unpleasing to the factions. No oppressed man can cause his petition to reach your sight. The Secretary of State presents, or burns, whatever is presented to him. He, and not your Royal Highness, is the person petitioned; and with your People, you have no more communication

than you have with the people of Africa.

A state of things like this never could have been wished for by any other but guilty men; by any but men, who wished, and who ardently wished, to see the King and People live in mutual distrust. Not content with regulations (having the effects of laws) to prevent the King from hearing the complaints of his subjects, the factions have actually taken measures to prevent a casual approach of King and subject to the persons of each other. They have surrounded you with their civil guards and spies: they have their runners to dog your steps: they have their purveyors of the press to blind you to the truth: you are their slave, under the name of Regent.

Their audacity went so far as to surround the king with *Police Officers*; and to give him for companions men famed for their adroitness at the discovering and catching of thieves. I once saw his Majesty in a race-box, into which nobody was admitted but his own Royal Family and those renowned personages *Townsend* and

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Mc. Manus, whose fame will endure as long as the pages of the Newgate Calenders shall exist.

"What," thought I, who had just then returned from America, "and have I been so long boasting of being the *subject* of a king, who stands in need of thief-takers to guard his person, by day as well as by night?" Oh, no! Sir; the feelings of my own heart; the countenances of the surrounding people; every thing told me, that the degradation was *not needed*. I wondered what it could be for; but, that wonder has long since ceased. The seat-fillers have, at last, however, brought themselves into a state to need, or to think that they need, such protection. The entrance to their places of meeting are guarded by ill-looking men, with the means of death under their doublets. The entrance there now resembles that of the vaults of the Inquisition.

In common life nothing more offends inferiors in point of rank, and nothing engenders deeper hatred and resentment, than a haughty, a distant, deportment on the part of superiors. The act speaks disdain

ten thousand times more plainly than words can do it. Charles II., to dislike whom there were so many good reasons, reconciled the people to him by his affability. Queen Elizabeth, the most high-toned sovereign that ever reigned in England, said to a foreign Ambassador, when he, during one of her processions, asked where *her guards* were, "these are *my guards*," pointing to the people, who are now, by those who rob them, called *the mob*. When a shot was fired into her barge, she said, that she was sure that it was impossible for it to have been intended to harm her. By this line of conduct, by her frequent appearance amongst *her people*, by her readiness to listen to the meanest of them, by her constantly associating their honour and their interest and safety and happiness with her own, she gained and preserved their love and admiration. And this was perfectly natural. They loved her because she continually convinced them, as well by her acts as her words, that she made common cause with them; and having their cordial good will, she was enabled to govern most

gloriously even while a new religion was introducing into the country. Towards those who had a share of the power in their hands she behaved with sternness enough; but, towards *her people* she was all graciousness, kindness and confidence. She was wise: she well knew where the *strength* lay, at last.

The language which the seat-filers now suffer the people to hear, is full of haughtiness, severity and suspicion. We now hear no gracious expressions. A *division* amongst the people is always supposed: a part is always marked out as *the disaffected*: a large portion to be restrained, or punished, or at least, *watched*. New punishments, new crimes, new shackles form the main part of that which we hear of from the source of honour and mercy. It is impossible to receive any other impression from this, than that *the people* are looked upon as a body that the king suspects, and that the seat-filers are to keep in awe.

I know of no ruler, however despotic, that may not be approached with a *petition*. To the Autocrat of Russia, any man

may, in person, deliver a paper. Napoleon received petitions in the streets. In short, England is the only country in the world, where writing is practised, where any man, be he who he may, cannot present a petition to the Chief Magistrate. This is a great mischief to the Royal Family, and particularly to your Royal Highness. When men have complaints to make, they feel some mitigation of their displeasure, when they have *made their complaint*. But, to *you* men cannot complain; and yet, it is in *your name* that they are *taxed and punished*. It is in that state, when hope leaves us, that we are most to be feared; and what hope can we have, when we cannot hope that our prayers for redress will be heard?

It matters not, may it please your Royal Highness, that *you are not the real cause* of these haughty and repulsive regulations. It is impossible for the mass of the people to know that. They find, that they can have no communication with you; they never know whether you hear them or not;

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they are never informed whether you receive their petitions; they never hear any thing you say, or any thing of your thoughts; they never *see you*; the few of them, comparatively, who see the coach in which you ride, see a bullet-proof vehicle only; a perambulating fortress surrounded by armed cavalry ten deep, and these accompanied by an immense army of men on foot with staves in their hands, ready to seize hold of, and to drag away, as an assassin, any one whose curiosity pushes him on but a yard too near you. What a life for any man, and, particularly, what a life for a *king of England*, to live! Can I, without being guilty of the grossest slander, without committing almost treason, say that these precautions are *necessary*? And, if they be not *necessary*, what a slander is here wantonly committed on the people!

To go forth, thus armed from head to foot, is an act the most ungracious as well as the most provoking. It is an attitude, which, at once, discovers fear and hurl's defiance: an attitude, which

never did, and never can, fail to excite both contempt and resentment. And for *what* is all this? If, indeed, the people, or any part of them, had petitioned to abolish the throne, or to lessen its powers, there might have been some reason for this preparation for defence: though, even then, it would have been better to perish from the violence of their hands.

But, the people had asked only for their own rights. They had asked only for a Reform of their *own House of Parliament*. They did not cry out against you or any of your family: they cried out against seat-selling, and all the corruptions and perfidy of the vile wretches who deal in seats. And, for *this cause*, you were to be put into a moving fortress and to have a new treason law passed to preserve your life!

The base usurpers know, that their cause is rotten. They know, that no man, who is not a real prostituted wretch; that no man but a public robber, in one shape or another, will attempt to defend and uphold bribery and perjury for their own sake; that no man

but a villain whom all must despise, will say, that perjury is a *right thing*. Therefore, the usurpers associate your cause with theirs. They say, "if we be not, " by the means of bribery, corruption, and perjury, suffered " to go on robbing the nation, the " throne will be destroyed, and " confusion and bloodshed will " succeed property and safety." And, thus, they have on their side the *hands* of many who curse them in their *hearts*.

This is the course which they have pursued for a long series of years; and, having with them prodigious numbers, who depend solely on the Debt, which must become nothing in case of Reform, they stand, though they have against them so many things likely to produce their fall.

The truth is, however, that they can no longer *deceive*: they can maintain themselves no longer by *deception*: they were compelled in 1817, to throw aside the mask: and they now rule as the Dey of Algiers rules; that is, by mere force and terror. Yet, weak as well as wicked, as they are, they are far from being *tranquil* in their

minds. They see that they have embarked with them all the timid, all the rich, all the sordid, all the public plunderers, and even the descendants of public plunderers; but, these are nothing *without the ability to continue to bribe*; and that ability, they now begin to see depends *wholly* upon the durability of the *Bank Note*. This, which is a state, in which no set of rulers were ever before placed, staggers the insolent tyrants, who, for the first time in their lives, begin to reflect on what may be the consequences of their iniquity. I know that one of them has said, that it is a sorrowful thing to know, that his "title and estates depend " on what a band of base Bankers shall do;" but he forgot that that base band derived their power from a baser band, of which he was one of the most efficient and most malignant.

If the seat-filers could place themselves in the situation of 1792, with a full view of the present perils before them, they would yield, and gladly yield. If they had now a Debt (for the Debt is theirs) of only two hundred and fifty millions, and could see all the con-

sequences of raising that Debt to its present amount: if they were told, and believed, that unless they agreed to a Reform, they must make the Debt *eleven hundred millions*; that they must have dungeon bills, gagging bills, new treason bills, alien bills, and a standing army, posted all over the country, in time of peace; that they must have soldiers to guard the judges at the Assize-towns, and to guard the sheriffs at the gallows; that they must employ spies and blood-money men; that the Judges must be objects of what I will not name instead of that more than religious reverence that used to belong to that great station; that they themselves must become hated, detested, abhorred by the very best people in the whole world, a people by whom their ancestors were so much respected and beloved and so cheerfully obeyed and honoured: that they must make common cause with a band of paper-money makers and loan-jobbers, degrade themselves by so vile an association, and, finally place their sole dependence for title and estate upon a bubble, which any man might cause to burst in a

few months, and that, in the meanwhile, they must assemble under the protection of *trusty* Police-Officers, first taking care to inspect the *cares beneath the building*: if such were now their situation and such their prospect, gladly would they close with us, and give us back our birth-right.

Such was their situation and such their real prospect in 1792. They, intent only on the present, were blind to the future. Right, reason, expediency, morality, religion: all were in favour of Reform. The usurpers, however, possessed force; and force they employed, without being at all aware of what the employment of that force would finally produce. They saw danger to their usurped authority and their gains attending it. To destroy those who were the cause of this danger was their only object. They never dreamt, that, out of their temporary success a ten-fold danger might arise. If your Royal Highness follow them in their progress, you will find them, at every stage of it, wholly careless about consequences, like those, which have now arisen. They have, at times,

talked like Coffee-house Soldiers, at others like Philpot-Lane negotiators, at others like Burn's Justice Lawyers, at others like Spies and Thief-Catchers, at others like Stock-Jobbers, at others like Bank-Directors; but never, no, not upon any one occasion, like Statesmen and Legislators. Not a single man, in either House, has ever, from first to last, seemed to have a correct idea as to the effects of their measures, and which effects are now throwing themselves in such alarming shapes. It was not until they had *completely succeeded*, that they began to see the consequences. It was not until they were drunk with joy at the thought of being able to trample on the people for ever: it was not until they had actually voted money to erect lofty columns and solemn temples with cloud-capped towers to immortalize their triumph over liberty, law and justice, that they began to perceive, that there were *consequences*, of which they had never thought.

Gladly would they now be in the state of 1792, and suffer the people to have their birth-right. But, they never can retræe their steps. They have now such a load of guilt upon them: they have now committed so many wicked acts: they are now so completely embarked with the Jenkinsons, Addingtons, Cannings, and Castlereaghs: they are now so entirely identified with the Olivers and Castleses and Reynoldses: they are now so closely allied to the Crosses, the Parson Powises, the Hampshire Parsons and the Bolton Fletchers: they have now incurred

the mortal hatred of so many able and determined men: they are now the objects of such a mass of deadly vengeance, that they think it *too late* to save themselves by any means other than those of hostility. And I frankly confess, that I think their opinion correct. Their progress has been so unprincipled, so insolent, so perfidious, so cruel and bloody, that there is scarcely a town or village which has not its victims to avenge. *Ruin: kill: destroy*: this has been their unvarying cry against every living creature that opposed them. For the attainment of their object they have spared neither force nor fraud. They have had no compassion on any mortal from the poor starving woman at Manchester to the brave and loyal Sailor, Cashman, who went out of the world blessing his king and country, and cursing these infamous tyrants; who are now happily reduced to an absolute dependence on a piece of thin paper not worth a farthing.

But, whatever may be their fate, it behoves every Englishman to do his best *to prevent them from dragging down the crown along with them*; and, therefore, in the ensuing Letters, I shall fully state to your Royal Highness my thoughts upon this important subject.

I am, *bea brevi*
May it please your Royal Highness,

Your most obedient,
And most humble Servant,
W.M. COBBETT.

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